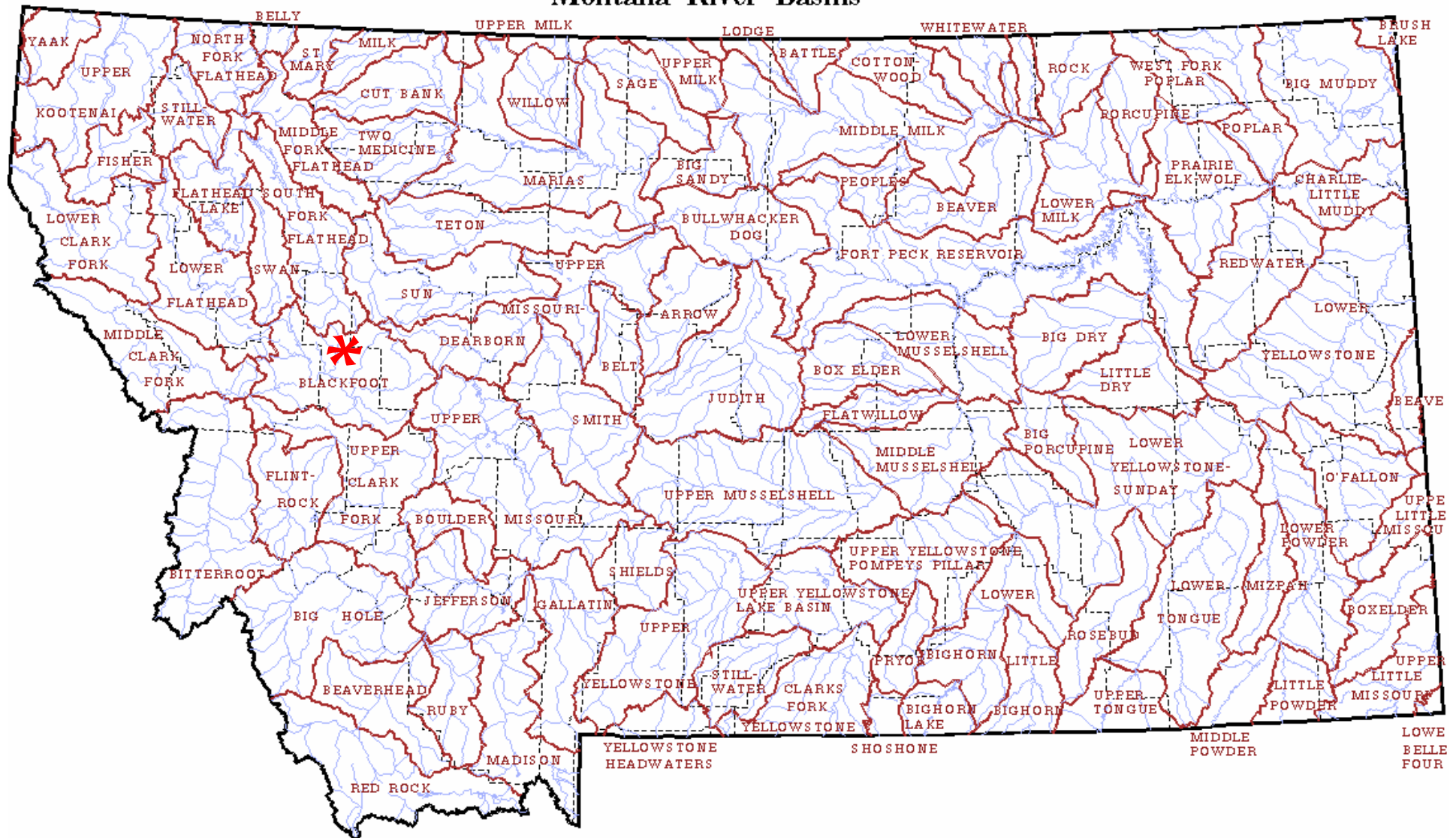


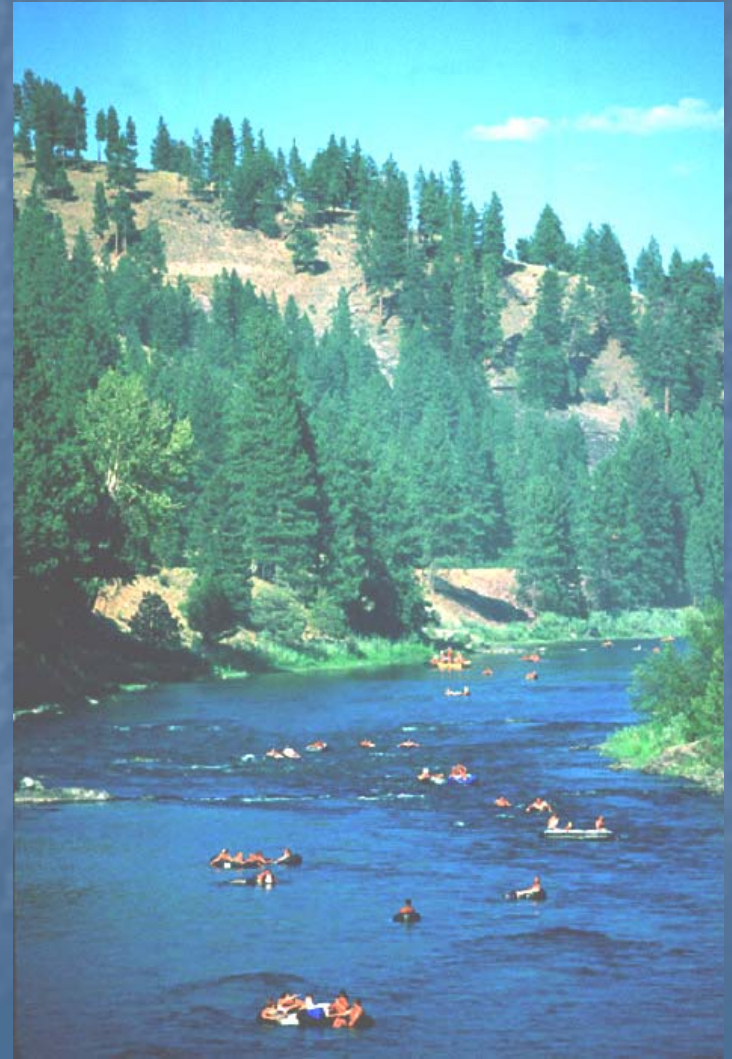
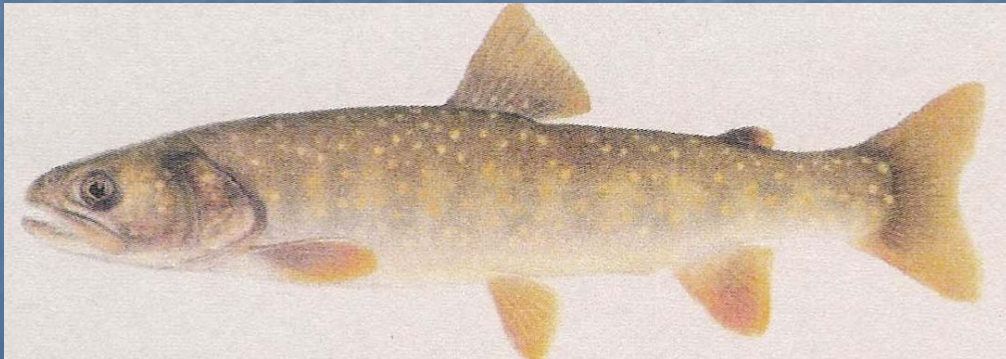
Blackfoot Drought & Water Conservation Committee

Blackfoot Watershed

Montana River Basins



Blackfoot Water Uses



- 1.5 million acres

Blackfoot Watershed

- 132 miles long

- 1,900 miles of perennial streams

- Mean daily discharge of 1,968 cfs



Blackfoot Water Rights

- 6,452 water rights
 - 3,853 ground water permits
 - 2,869 surface water permits
- Irrigation represents 65% of water diversions – 730 cfs over irrigation season
- Closed Basin
- Murphy Right protects in-stream flows



History of the Blackfoot Drought Response

- Severe drought conditions in winter 2000
- Concerns about enforcement of Murphy Rights--Dissatisfaction with past enforcement
- Public meetings
- Long history of conservation –Support for different local approach



Responding to Drought

- Only a basin-wide effort with multiple users will work
- Shared sacrifice – by everyone giving a little, everyone benefits
- Voluntary participation and plan development

Drought Response Goals

- Aid in the equitable distribution of water resources during low flow periods
- Minimize adverse impacts of drought on fisheries

Blackfoot Drought Committee

- Coordinated through the Blackfoot Challenge and BBCTU
- Local involvement from irrigators & anglers
- Collaborative effort
- Partners
 - Local landowners
 - Outfitters & anglers
 - DNRC, FWP, Conservation Districts
 - USFWS, USFS, NRCS, USGS
 - Trout Unlimited, Western Water Project, NCAT

A scenic landscape photograph of a river or lake. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding trees. The trees on the left bank are lush green, while those on the right and in the distance show signs of autumn, with yellow and orange leaves. In the background, a range of mountains is visible under a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

2000 drought response results

Estimated conserved water demand 210 cfs.

73 Water User Participated

Blackfoot Drought Committee

- Work with all water users
- Monitor precip and snowpack conditions
- Provide public with updates
- support to projects that promote and improve in-stream flows and long-term water conservation
- Implement the Emergency Drought Response during low flow years

Monitoring Drought Conditions



January – April

- the committee meets monthly to monitor snow pack, precipitation, and other drought indicators
- Letter to plan participants with conditions update

Monitoring Drought Conditions

May and June

- Monitoring precipitation, stream flows and runoff
- NRCS Stream Flow Outlook
- Increased public outreach and awareness

Drought Plan Implementation

By June

- decision on implementation
- Letters to water users
- confirm participation
- Increased monitoring of stream flows and water temperatures
- Contact water users to implement plan



Drought Plan Triggers

- Stream flows and temperature trigger specific actions
 - Critical flow levels are 700 cfs, 600 cfs, and 450 cfs
- Stream temperatures are monitored by FWP

Results



- Average of 70 irrigators participating
- an average of 60 cfs of in-stream flows maintained
- Average of 8 commercial outfitters participating
- Reduction in angling pressure during drought
- More engaged Public

Drought Affects Everyone – You Can Help!

- Road-side signs
- Website
- Posters
- FWP Radio
- Press Releases
- Television
- Non-traditional participants



Water Supply Report

Drought Flows Reached

The Blackfoot Emergency Drought Response Plan has now been activated. The Drought Response encourages all water users to voluntarily reduce impacts through the following actions:

- Irrigation scheduling based upon water supply.
- Irrigation water conservation.
- Domestic in-house water conservation.
- Lawn & landscape watering reductions.
- Angling reductions in response to low stream flows & high water temperatures.
- Long-term water management and habitat improvements.

For More Information or a Conditions Update Contact:

Blackfoot Drought Response Committee
PO Box 103
Ovando, Montana 59854

www.blackfootchallenge.org
406-793-3800



Drought affects everyone

You can help

Tips for Anglers

- Limit fishing to the morning hours (dawn to noon) and avoid bull trout spawning streams.
- Seek out waters less affected by low flows - lakes, spring creeks and tailwater rivers where water temperatures are in the safe range for trout.
- Use barbless hooks, avoid lures, large streamers and large nymphs that are likely to hook bull trout.
- Use heavier tippets, land and release all fish quickly.
- Do not take fish out of the water, release them in calm water near cover.
- Abide by all special drought regulations put forth by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

Five consecutive years of drought have taken a toll on the Blackfoot fisheries. Fish populations are showing signs of sustained drought stress. Recent surveys indicate that the lower Blackfoot River has experienced a **25% decline** in total trout numbers, while the middle Blackfoot River (below the North Fork) has seen a **50% decline**. Rainbow and bull trout have been particularly hard hit. Please abide by these angler tips to help protect fisheries during this critical drought period.

For More Information Contact:

Blackfoot Drought Response Committee, Box 103, Ovando, Montana 59854
www.blackfootchallenge.org



Blackfoot Challenge: 2006 Drought Information - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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2006 Drought Information

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Introduction to Drought

Below are links to various websites and information from the Drought and Water Conservation Committee that can help you prepare for and respond to drought. For more information on our efforts, see [Drought & Water Conservation Committee](#).

Thank you for your interest in the Blackfoot Challenge's drought efforts!

Drought Committee Updates:

Blackfoot Basin Water Supply Updates:

- [Water Supply Report - April 2006](#)
- [Water Supply Report - March 2006](#)
- [Water Supply Report - February 2006](#)

Monitoring Drought Conditions in the Blackfoot:

Monitoring Streamflow:

Current streamflow conditions listed by gauge station. Five gauge stations are located in the Blackfoot: Blackfoot River near Bonner, North Fork Blackfoot River near Ovando, Blackfoot River above Nevada Creek, Nevada Creek above reservoir and Nevada Creek at the mouth. [USGS Real-Time Data for Montana Streamflow](#)

Monitoring Water Supply:

5 monthly Water Supply Outlook Reports and the Low Flow forecast data. [NRCS Water Supply & Reservoir Storage](#)

Monitoring Precipitation:

Snow and precipitation data (both site and basin wide) for the current water year. [NRCS Snow Survey Program](#)

Executive Committee
Education & Outreach Committee
Conservation Strategies Committee
Drought, Water Conservation & Recreation Committee
Habitat & Water Quality Restoration Committee
Weeds Committee
Wildlife Committee
Forestry Committee
Lewis & Clark Committee

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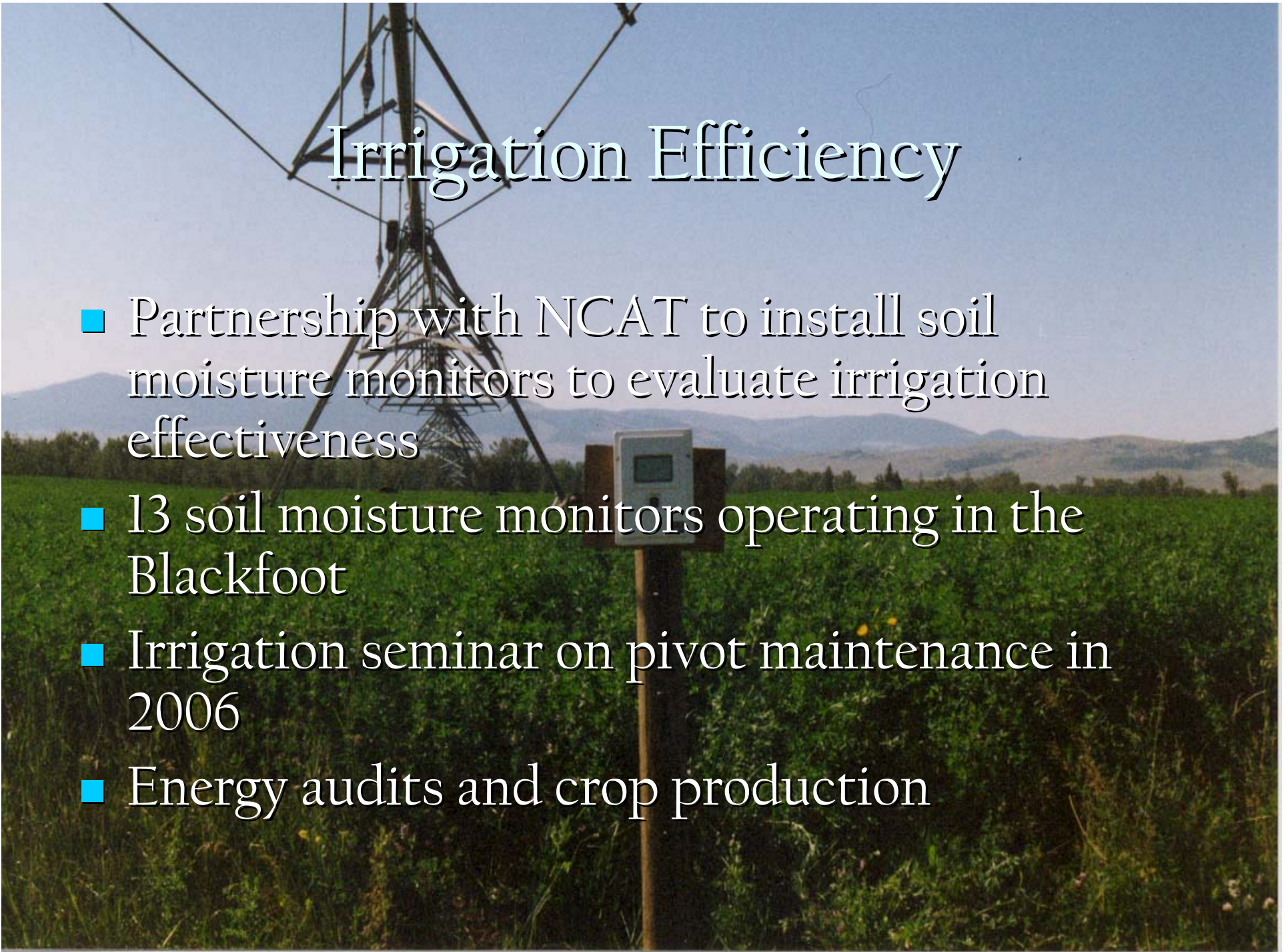
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Long-Term Water Conservation

- Habitat restoration & in-stream flow water leases
- Appropriate irrigation system conversions
- Pooling of water rights and utilizing “water banks” for critical irrigation periods

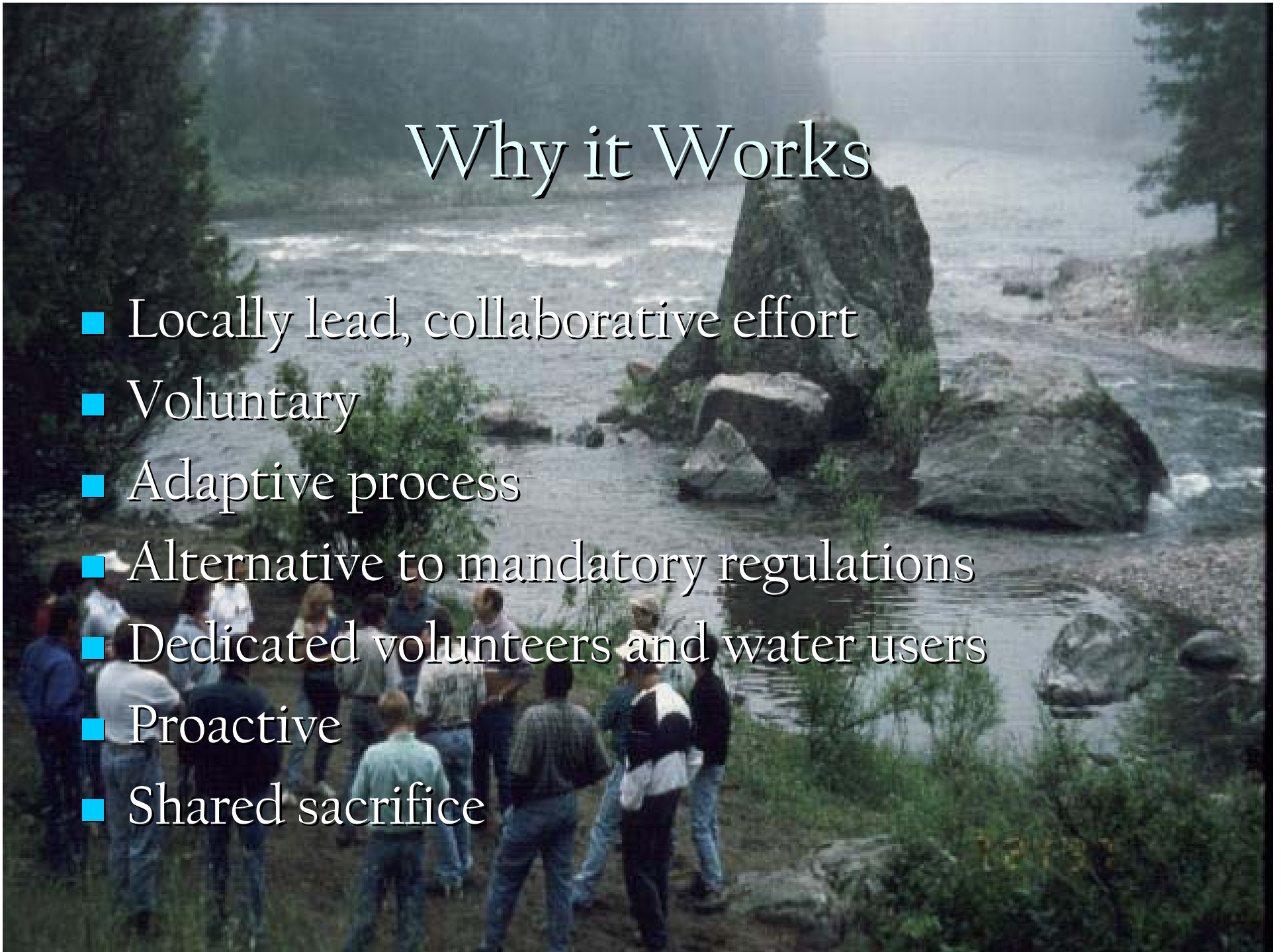
Irrigation Efficiency

- Partnership with NCAT to install soil moisture monitors to evaluate irrigation effectiveness
- 13 soil moisture monitors operating in the Blackfoot
- Irrigation seminar on pivot maintenance in 2006
- Energy audits and crop production



Why it Works

- Locally lead, collaborative effort
- Voluntary
- Adaptive process
- Alternative to mandatory regulations
- Dedicated volunteers and water users
- Proactive
- Shared sacrifice



A scenic landscape photograph of a river flowing through a forested area. The river is in the foreground, with a rocky shoreline on the left and a grassy bank on the right. The water is slightly turbulent, reflecting the sky. In the background, there are tall evergreen trees and a distant mountain range under a sky filled with soft, white clouds. The overall mood is peaceful and natural.

Questions

www.blackfootchallenge.org